

**ABSOLUTE BEING AS EXPLAINED BY THOMAS AQUINAS
IN HIS *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*,
CORRELATED WITH ABSOLUTE BEING AS EXPLAINED
BY MAHARISHI MAHESH YOGI
IN HIS *SEVEN STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS*
compiled by Rev. Dr. John R. Reigstad**

References to related Aquinas passages, bracketed below in lower case bold, are from below the *Summa Theologiae, Questions on God*, ed. Brian Davies and Brian Leftow, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006. The sections headed by UPPER CASE BOLD are from *The Seven States of Consciousness*, by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Maharishi International University, Fairfield, Iowa, 1992 audiotape transcript. Maharishi attempted to define the experience of Absolute Being in terms of meditation and physiology. (One of the earliest academic papers on this was "The Physiology of Meditation, by Robert Keith Wallace, *Scientific American*, Vol. 226, 1972, pp. 84-90).

I. A. [Aquinas: Q2A3, Argument from Gradations for the existence of God, or Absolute Being; Q3A1,A7, God's simplicity; Q4A1, God's perfection; Q5A1, God's goodness and Q21A2, God's love (essence of faith); Q7 God's limitlessness; Q10 God's eternity; Q11 God's oneness; Q25, God's omnipotence (source of all power); Q12, A3, God's transcendence); Q13,A1, God's *silentium*].

I. B. MAHARISHI:

**THE EXPERIENCING OF FINER AND FINER GRADES OF
THOUGHT LEADS
TO ABSOLUTE BEING.**

MMY: As long as the thinking mind is experiencing a thought, so long the mind is a thinker. And the thought becomes finer and finer, and then the thinker becomes more and more alert in order to experience the finer thought, and then the thought becomes finer and finer, it becomes finest. And when the thought drops off, [the] thinker remains all by himself, and this is Self-realization.

This state of pure consciousness is realization of the Self. It is also called Self-awareness. Here the Self is not aware of anything else. It was aware of the thought, and now the thought has dropped off. The Self remains all by itself. It is aware of itself. This is Self-awareness or Self-consciousness. This is Self-realization. What [do] I have to do to realize my Self? I have only to stop realizing things from within and see that I don't go to sleep. Otherwise, the very experience is that, when I am closed to all that experience, then I go to sleep. This is a daily

experience. If I go out of all this experience and don't fall into the inner sphere of sleep, then I'll be awake in my Self. And when I'm awake in my Self, this is Self-realization, or Self-consciousness, or the state of Being. This is how to be.

When we are active, we are active; we are active. How to be? Stop being active, but don't become passive. This is how to be. The technique to be is, stop acting, but don't go to sleep. Just be. Pure awareness, and this is Self-realization.

II. EXPERIENCING ABSOLUTE BEING IS AN EASY PROCESS.

MMY: For thousands of years, maybe hundreds [laughter], Self-realization has been declared to be a difficult thing. It is surprising to a rational mind. How can I be difficult to myself? A rational mind finds it difficult to believe that Self-realization can be difficult. If I can be difficult to myself, then only Self-realization can be difficult. But I can't be difficult to myself, because I AM my Self. . . .

[cp Aquinas: Q3, God's simplicity:]

MMY: Self-realization is the simplest thing that one could accomplish in life. I am not responsible for the fury of those writers who have been writing that it is difficult and difficult, and if I say it is easy, they must be furious with me. But I don't mind.

III. ABSOLUTE BEING IS NOT OF THE CREATED ORDER BUT IS PRIOR TO THE CREATED ORDER.

[Q4, Aquinas: God's perfection:]

MMY: Self-realization! Now think for a moment. I see a flower, and I am this here. The object of sight is here. These are the two points of reference. But *this* point of reference is only with reference to *this* point of reference. The experiencer has to be established first before the object of experience could be established.

I have to know my Self first, before I can know a flower. If I say I see the flower, then the question comes, Who sees the flower? Who is the seer? Who is the eyes? I don't know. [Laughter] The whole activity of seeing and the phenomenal perception is completely invalid and baseless without the knowledge of the Self. So the Self has to be realized first, and then only anything else can possibly be realized. . . .

MMY: IV. ABSOLUTE BEING IS THE GROUND OF KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION.

MMY: Now I am making another point about the baselessness of education, that the knowledge of the Self is not provided. And without

the knowledge of the Self, the whole knowledge of any branch of learning is just hanging in the air. The student of physics says, "I am a student of physics. I am a student of chemistry." Fine. Who is the student of physics? This body, this mind? What? Who is the knower of knowledge?

Without the nature of the Self, the whole field of knowledge is completely baseless, bogus. It has no meaning.

"I see the flower." Is there any truth in this sentence, "I see the flower"? Who is the "I"? If I am in ignorance, then the whole process of seeing and the flower, the whole thing is based on ignorance. It is on the intellectual level that we decide the principles, not on what we see.

Many times, the perception is deceptive. But what we decide intellectually, we hold that to be true. And if we decide intellectually that "I" am not found, then we decide intellectually that the whole process of seeing is just useless. It has no basis. It has no truth in it.

We see the sun rising from the east and going to [the] west every day. The sun is traveling and traveling and traveling. But we know it is not traveling. We base our principle on what we understand intellectually, not on what we see. We don't base our knowledge about the sun on what we see: It is rising in the east and traveling to the west. The sun never goes from east to west.

When we know that without the knowledge of the Self the entire field of perception and action is just baseless, this is what makes the whole field of relative life completely hanging in the air, and a life hanging in the air without a basis must necessarily be in a state of nonfulfillment, must necessarily be in a state of suffering, chaos, confusion—no settlement anywhere.

Therefore, the knowledge of the Self, Self-consciousness, is the basis of all that we live in the relative field of life. All the states of consciousness, waking, dreaming, sleeping, are based on that Self-consciousness.

When we gain Self-consciousness, then the three relative states of consciousness, waking, dreaming, sleeping, get a foundation to themselves. Otherwise, the whole field of life is without a foundation, like a wall without a foundation, ready to collapse at any time, always at the mercy of the wind.

So this relative field of life—waking, dreaming states of consciousness—is not supported and supplemented by the knowledge of the pure consciousness, The whole structure of life is baseless. . . .

One has to establish one's Self, and if one has established one's Self, better find that Being, find that Self. And then by the time we find one's Self, what we find is our existence [i.e., essence] is enormous, unbounded, eternal, bliss, infinite happiness, infinite energy, infinite intelligence. **[The above paragraph by Maharishi contrasts with Aquinas Q4A3, where for Aquinas the human resembles God. Maharishi concludes that the essence of individual being**

ultimately is the essence of absolute Being. Note that the *Summa* page xxxiii states that after writing prolifically since 1248, on December 6, 1273 Aquinas had a “mystical experience” and abruptly stopped writing. Possibilities: 1) the immediate experience of God/Being made writing about God existentially unnecessary for Aquinas; and/or 2) his experience may have led him to a divine immanence theory of human personality that conflicted with Roman Catholic doctrine.]

MMY: V. THE EXPERIENCE OF ABSOLUTE BEING BRINGS STABILITY AND REFRESHMENT TO THE SELF.

MMY: Look at the great possibility. We have that great reservoir of intelligence, energy, happiness, eternity of life, absolute stability of being. And then we are not living that great inner treasury in our day-to-day life. What a loss to life and living! **[cp Aquinas: Q20A3, the infinite blessedness of persons immersed in Being]**

There is no greater damage, and there is no greater loss to life, than not finding that infinite reservoir within, and not bringing it out to be lived in our sphere of activity. We can only repent for all the past hundreds of years when everything has been said to be difficult and difficult and difficult. All that has been wrong and completely obsolete for the present time.

This pure consciousness is the fourth state of consciousness—waking, dreaming, sleeping, and this pure consciousness. . . .

In the beginning, the mind goes and comes out quickly, as we dive in and in the same stroke we come out. Go in and come out, go in and come out, and go in...A few divings in and out, and in and out, in and out. What happens? The gold of the bottom begins to be lived even when you come out onto the surface. And this is the [reason] for [which] we dive in and out.

The bliss of the pure consciousness which the mind gains when the mind reaches the source of thought, which is the Being, that comes out as the urge to the nature of the mind, as the mind goes and comes out and goes and comes out.

Like a white cloth dipped in yellow color, and once it is dipped, it comes out. Every dipping brings the color a little more, and a little more, and a little more.

What do we do? If we know the art of coloring, then having dipped it last, we put it to the sun and allow it to fade away as much as it can fade away, and then put it back and put to the sun. That means we subject it to two contradictory processes, one of absorbing the color, and the other of fading it out. Dip it and it absorbs the color, put it to the sun and the color fades away. These two contrary processes together go to make the color fast.

And one time, it never fades away—it becomes fast. Like that, the mind goes deep within. It becomes pure consciousness. Just as the wave, it begins to sink on the water, and sink on the water, and sink on the water, and comes on the flat, motionless surface of the ocean. The wave becomes the ocean: absolute silence, no trace of the wave. It becomes the ocean. Another wave comes up. The ocean rises up in a wave. The wave gains an individuality, then it sinks. It gains that unboundedness of the ocean.

Like that, the individual mind gets into the transcendent state of pure consciousness or Being. It becomes Being, unbounded, eternal. It becomes pure consciousness, it becomes bliss consciousness, it becomes...That nature of that field, bliss consciousness, is stability, nonchanging eternal Being. All these qualities adhere to the nature of the mind, some of it.

[Maharishi's above-described process of meditation compares to the process of contemplation mentioned by Aquinas in reference to Jacob "seeing God" in "high and extraordinary degree of contemplation," Q12A11.1,2. In Q12A11.4 Aquinas observes that intellect cannot "see" essence of God but does not observe that individual being can transcend intellect and experience absolute Being beyond sight and beyond human understanding.]

[cp. Aquinas, Q18A2 "Is life an activity?" Here Aquinas seems to waver between, on the one hand, defining life as a relative activity only approaching God; and, on the other hand, defining life as "knowing God" or experiencing God. "Knowing" could be defined as familiarity with fact and function, thus "mystical" activity of contemplation or meditation or prayer has potential to bring knowledge of God through familiarity with, or integration with, Absolute Being.]

MMY: The mind engages in the field of activity, and then quite a lot of that quality is gone; it evaporates, and then comes back again and gets saturated again, and coming out into the same activity, it loses itself again. This back and forth, putting the mind to activity, putting the mind to meditation, to that state of pure consciousness, bringing it to activity again. Five minutes in the bank and full day in the market, and again five minutes in the bank and full day in the market... [audience laughter] Just this proportion.

We don't meditate all [the] time, no! We come out of meditation and put ourselves full-fledged in activity. Tremendous activity we undertake. And then in the evening we go back again, a few dives in the evening. And then in ten to twelve hours of the night it is gone again.

This is culturing the nervous system, subjecting the nervous system to retire from activity to get some complete rest in that restful alertness which produces pure Being or pure consciousness, exposing the nervous system back to activity. Within these swings from

activity to least activity, the nervous system gains that habit of quickly transferring itself to this waking state, quickly transferring itself to this pure consciousness. [Here Maharishi integrates absolute Being with physiology, something Aquinas does not attempt to do in the *Summa*.]

**MMY: VI. REGULAR EXPERIENCES OF ABSOLUTE BEING
INTEGRATE INDIVIDUAL BEING AND UNIVERSAL BEING IN THE
HUMAN NERVOUS SYSTEM.**

MMY: This quick transference of the physical structure gives the nervous system an ability where it continues to reflect pure consciousness at the time when it is reflecting waking state of consciousness. So both states of consciousness begin to be reflected simultaneously.

One lives bliss-consciousness permanently, whether one is waking or dreaming or sleeping. In a deep sleep, one is wide awake inside the body and mind. Everything takes complete rest, deep rest. Body complete deep rest. Inside, completely awake. During activity, one is engaged in vigorous activity, but has an unshakable stand of bliss consciousness.

One begins to live these two states of consciousness simultaneously, waking and pure consciousness, and this is called cosmic consciousness.

This state of cosmic consciousness has a corresponding state of [the] nervous system in which the nervous system does not lose pure consciousness, does not lose that restful alertness in bliss-consciousness. [The] nervous system never loses that state of restful alertness which reflects bliss-consciousness, even though it is engaged in the field of activity in the waking state, even though it is engaged in the activity of the illusory experiences during [the] dreaming state, even though it is engaged in the passivity of the deep sleep. In whatever state of relative consciousness the nervous system is exposed, it retains that Absolute bliss-consciousness, this state of life where the nervous system is permanently established in restful alertness, reflecting bliss-consciousness no matter whether one engages in waking, dreaming, or sleeping states of relative consciousness.

Such a state of life is called cosmic consciousness. "Cosmic" means all-inclusive. All-inclusive in this connection is, relative states of consciousness and Absolute state of consciousness—all the three relative and one Absolute taken together. This is cosmic consciousness. [This integration of Absolute and relative is also an attempt to integrate human physiology with the experience of God, something Aquinas did not attempt.]

**MMY: INTEGRATION OF ABSOLUTE BEING WITH INDIVIDUAL
BEING SAVES THE SELF [OR SOUL] IN ETERNAL LIFE. THIS**

INTEGRATION OCCURS ON THE LEVEL OF BEING, NOT ON THE LEVEL OF THINKING.

MMY: Now, permanent state of cosmic consciousness is only possible when the nervous system is cultured to reflect both absolute and relative. Therefore, we must bear in mind that cosmic consciousness cannot be gained by psychological thinking. One may begin to think that I am experiencing this and experiencing this. It will be mental hallucination.

It's not by thinking about cosmic consciousness that the nervous system can be cultured. No! Not thinking, not mood-making, not apprehension about cosmic consciousness, not imagination about cosmic consciousness—but subjecting the nervous system to gain pure consciousness, and subjecting it back to gain waking state of consciousness. This way, the real culture of the physical structure of the personality is responsible to bring about cosmic consciousness. It's a state which is as realistic to life as waking state of consciousness. . . .

When the nature of the flower falls on the screen of the mind, the screen of the mind is bliss-consciousness, then bliss-consciousness becomes overshadowed by the image of the flower. And this is how every experience loses the real nature of the mind, which is bliss-consciousness.

We enjoy the flower at the cost of bliss-consciousness. That means we register on our record a hundred dollars gained, and what we find is [a] million dollars lost. Bliss consciousness is overshadowed by the joy of this little flower.

This is what we mean, that we lose our selves in the object of perception. Whatever we see, that scene imprints in our mind, and what we lose is real nature of the mind, bliss-consciousness of the mind. Just like [a] cinema screen, white. The screen is white, but all the pictures that fall on it overshadow that white color. What we see is the colored pictures. What we don't see is the real nature of the screen. Like that, if I am not able to retain my Self when I am experiencing something, then that something gets imprinted on my own real nature, which is bliss-consciousness, and the result is that I lose bliss consciousness and then gain the joy of this experience. . . .

The pure consciousness is called the Spirit, or Being. Now when I say Spirit, I don't mean these spirits which become mediums and all that; not the spirits of the spirit world, spiritism, but the Spirit, the inner Being. So only the matter remains—the flower remains—and what gets lost is pure consciousness or the inner Spirit, or Being. So when the matter only dominates, and the value of the Spirit is overshadowed by the value of the matter, then it is called material life.

A man lives material life when he is not able to secure, he is not able to hold onto his inner spirituality of Being. When he has to sacrifice Being for the sake of material experience, this is a material life.

MMY: VII. SPIRITUAL LIFE IS INTEGRATION OF ABSOLUTE BEING WITH INDIVIDUAL BEING.

MMY: Spiritual life will be that one is wide awake in his own nature, in the nature of the Self, or in the nature of inner spirituality. In the nature of inner Being, one is wide awake, and one is closed to all the impressions of the outside material life. That is transcendental pure consciousness. This is pure spiritual life. This is pure spirituality. Pure spirituality is transcendental Being, pure consciousness.

Pure material life is the mind subjected to outside experience, where the Self is not able to maintain its pure being. Inner spirituality, outer material life—in between the two is spiritual life.

Integrated life is that state where we enjoy the outside world and experience everything of relative life, and yet we are able to hold onto our bliss-consciousness. This is integration of life. We are experiencing, yet not lost in the experience. . . .

And when one realizes the Self, what one realizes is that I am that unbounded, eternal, absolute nonchanging Being, bliss-consciousness. I AM. And then in comparison with the inner nature of my Self, the entire world is changing, it is phenomenal. It has variety of choice, but the Being is eternal bliss-consciousness. This is bound in time and space; everything is bound in time and space. But Being is unbounded beyond space; it is transcendental nature. It lies in the field of eternity of time. It is time, space, causation-bound relative life; and that is timeless, spaceless, unbounded eternity.

This is the realization one gets when one knows what one's Self is. So, realization of the Self first, and then realization of the creation. The two realizations give the relationship between the inner Self and outer world. And the relationship of the inner Self and the outer world is, this is relative, this is Absolute. . . .

And having risen to that most developed state of human life, so that one lives that high state of life where everything is easy and one's life is fully supported by Nature, every thought will be materialized, just we don't do anything and enjoy everything. One should live life and enjoy life on that level.